

MACCOLL HOUSE
1157 Highway 15/401 West
Bennettsville vicinity
Marlboro County
South Carolina

HABS SC-876
SC-876

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MacCOLL HOUSE

HABS No. SC-876

Location: The structure is located at 1157 Highway 15-401 West, Bennettsville, Marlboro County, South Carolina. The house sits on Appin Farm just south of the McCall Mill Pond with the back porch facing north.

Present Owner: Catherine G. Rogers is a descendant of the original owner, John MacColl.

Present Use: Dwelling.

Significance: One of few extant structures built by Scottish highland immigrants in South Carolina, the MacColl house is an excellent example of the assimilation of Scottish building traditions to vernacular architecture of the Lowcountry. The MacColl house is likely the second structure built on the farmstead by John MacColl, a Scottish immigrant that came to South Carolina at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Description: A one and a half story timber frame dwelling, the structure is a variation of the hall and parlor plan. The John MacColl house has four rooms on the first floor with a one-room attic space on the second floor.

History: The structure was built ca. 1810 by the owner, John MacColl. While the house has always been used as a residence, it and the kitchen house were relocated from the original site in Dillon, South Carolina (formerly known as Marion County) by Catherine G. Rogers in 2000 because they were no longer being maintained. Ms. Rogers restored the house retaining most of the original fabric as less than 25 percent had deteriorated beyond repair. The replacement material was harvested from dilapidated historic buildings in surrounding counties.

Historian: Bridget J. O'Brien, Clemson University/ College of Charleston, June 10, 2010.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: ca. 1810
2. Architect: None

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, use: John MacColl purchased 150 acres of land in Old Marion County, now Dillon County, South Carolina in 1809. The house and lands, called Donoho Plantation, were passed to the wife and children of John MacColl at his death in 1858.¹ The land continued to pass to MacColl descendents until the early 1900's when the current owners, the Calhoun Family, purchased it.²
4. Builders, contractor, suppliers: The dwelling was constructed by John MacColl of local pine trees harvested from the surrounding landscape.
5. Original plans and construction: The dwelling is now, as it originally stood, a variation of the hall and parlor plan with four rooms on the first floor and a one room attic space on the second floor.
6. Alterations and additions: The structure has not undergone any major alterations or additions. The only alterations have been minor electricity and plumbing by the current owner Catherine G. Rogers.

B. Historical Context:

The austere lifestyle of the pioneers that settled in the northeast region of South Carolina is shown in the simple, traditional construction of the John MacColl house. Though the treatment of the interior surfaces shows superior craftsmanship, the dwelling was part of a working farm, Donoho Plantation, which continues to grow tobacco, cotton, soybeans, wheat, rye, and oats and raise cattle. Appin Farm, where the house now sits, is also a working farm growing many of the crops listed above.

From 1789 to 1909 the area now known as Dillon County, was called Marion District/County,³ and was settled largely by Scottish immigrants from the Highlands. The settlers cleared the forests for farmland and used the trees to build structures on farm sites and for profit in the gristmill. Today, the northeast region of South Carolina is still largely agricultural, growing crops such as cotton, peanuts, oats, wheat, soybeans and corn.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: The John MacColl house is a timber framed, one and a half story raised variation of the hall-parlor plan with four rooms on the first floor and an attic space above the hall and parlor. A defining

¹ Catherine Rogers. E-mail, September 14, 2008.

² "Home", www.CalhounFarms.com, June, 15, 2010

³ "History", www.sciway3.net/proctor/dillon, June 23, 2010.

feature of the MacColl house is the level of trim detail used, despite the fact that the structure was a residence on a working farm. In the main parlor and west bedroom (Bedroom A) is a decorative chair rail that is also used on the exterior of the southern wall, on the front porch- this is a rather unusual detail. Another architectural detail seen throughout the structure is a ceiling molding used in almost every room of the house, including the enclosed stair. Given that most of these decorative details would have not been seen by anyone outside the family, it is unusual that time and money would be taken to add them to the interior and exterior walls of the dwelling.

2. Condition of fabric: While much of the original fabric was intact, some replacement materials were needed during the 2000 restoration. To ensure compatibility with reused materials historic fabric from local buildings was used, and when able, materials were spliced rather than replaced.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: The structure measures 29 feet running east to west and 34 feet 3 inches running north the south.
2. Foundations: The foundation of the structure is composed of 13 piers of pre-Civil War brick taken from local Marlboro County plantations. Though the brick used for the foundations is not original to the house, the color and consistency match bricks found on the original home site. On the corners, the piers form an "L" shape.
3. Walls: The exterior walls are constructed of hand-hewn pine studs with corner diagonal braces of the same material; clapboards are nailed to the studs.
4. Structural system, framing: The house sits on both original hand-hewn sills and a handful of replacement ones, as well that are pegged together at the corners. Floor joists on the first and second floor are also hand-hewn, and run in a north to south direction. These joists are notched into the sills and summer beam on the first floor and into the end girts and summer beam on the second.

Exterior walls and the north wall running along the main parlor and west bedroom are load bearing. Two walls in the back bedrooms that border the back porch and the interior wall between the main parlor and west bedroom are thin, non-load bearing walls.

The roof system is comprised of a rafter to plate construction, with the girt, post and plates joined with mortise and tenon joints. Constructed of roughly hand-hewn logs, the rafters sit about 12 inches apart.

Approximately every third rafter pair is stabilized by a collar tie. Ten inch horizontal roofing boards are spaced about six inches from one another above the rafters. These, in turn, are covered with plank sheathing and pine shingles; pine ridge boards, secured with nails, cap the peak.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads: The structure has one porch running the length of the southern façade, projecting nine feet towards the south. Four wooden columns with lambs tongue design support the porch roof. A balustrade of square posts one-inch wide runs the entire length and width of the porch, except for the stair.

At the rear of the dwelling is a small back porch that is set between the two back rooms and measures 6 feet, 1 inch wide and 9 feet, 4 ½ inches long. This porch is covered by a shed roof, but has no columns as it is held up by the two back rooms.

6. Chimneys: There is one exterior, gable-end chimney on the east façade of the house constructed of red clay handmade brick.
7. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are two exterior six-panel doors that lead to the main part of the dwelling. These are constructed of pine; the rails and styles are joined with mortise and tenon and are pegged towards the corner. One on the southern façade is directly opposite that on the northern façade – both access the main parlor. These doors are constructed of heart pine with a cyma recta decorative trim on the panels facing the exterior of the house. There is no panel trim on the interior. The door surround on the exterior of the house has a ½ inch bead with board terminating in a cyma recta trim; the interior surround has the same decorative trim. A third exterior door leads from the back porch to the northwest room and is the same as the two previously mentioned doors. It too has a cyma recta molding on the six panels facing the exterior and no trim on the interior. The door surround on the exterior is also the same pattern as those above, however, the interior surround terminates in a one-inch thick board, and not cyma recta trim. These doors fit into a simple pine doorframe.
 - b. Windows and shutters: First story and gable end second story windows are six-over-six, double-hung sash windows with slight variations in height and width. Each window has a one-inch sill and the same exterior molding as the door surround, though the window board with bead has a width of 2 5/8 inches. There is a one-inch sill located on all first floor exterior windows and a hood, also one-inch in width, that projects off the wall at a downward angle.

The second story casement windows on the north and south façades have the same exterior molding profiles listed above, with a board and bead measuring 2 3/8 inches. There is a 3 5/8 inch thick exterior sill that includes tin flashing and no hood, as these windows are located under the roof eaves. There are nine lights in each casement window.

8. Roof
 - a. Shape, covering: The gable roof is constructed of heart pine support framing with pine shingles, as are both porch roofs.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Projecting 8 3/4 inches at its base, with the shingles one to one-half inch off the edge of the second story wall, the eaves are constructed of pine. There is no gutter system on the dwelling; however, tin flashing is located where the porch roof meets the base of the second story exterior wall and runs the entire length of the structure.
 - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: A variation of the hall-parlor plan, the MacColl House is a one and a half story structure with four rooms on the first floor and one room on the second. The two doorways on the first floor lead into the main parlor, which has the only fireplace on the first floor. There are two smaller rooms off the main parlor, one located to the west, and the other at the northeast corner of the dwelling. The fourth room on the first floor is located at the northwest corner, and opens to the back porch; this room does not have direct access to the main part of the house. Oral tradition calls it a "parsons" or "travelers" room and is only known to exist one other dwelling in this area- the Daniel McKay house built in 1790 by a Scottish highland immigrant. The second floor of the house is one large room, and though the ceiling height reaches eight feet at the middle, the walls begin to slope at around five feet. The second fireplace is located on the east wall of this room.
2. Stairways: There is one enclosed staircase located in the northwest corner of the main parlor and runs south to north.
3. Flooring: All floors in the house are constructed of pine boards. In the main parlor, west bedroom and attic the floor boards run horizontally, east to west, and range in width from four to seven inches. In the back two rooms, as well as the front and back porch, the pine floorboards run

vertically, north the south, and range in width from two to six inches. None of the pine floors are finished.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: All the walls and ceilings of the dwelling are comprised of lightly sanded, unfinished pine boards. In the main parlor there is a wainscot measuring two feet, six inches on every wall with pine boards running vertically above it to the ceiling molding. In the west bedroom the same wainscot is located on all walls except the closet wall, which has a simple baseboard and vertical boards over the entire length of the wall. The northeast room has horizontal boards on three walls, with vertical boards on the west wall butting the porch. A similar trend is seen in the northwest room where three of the walls run horizontally, while boards on the wall butting the back porch run vertically. On the east wall of this room is a simple baseboard of a two-inch tall board with one-half inch bead.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are two interior doorways, though only the west room has a door. The door is equal to the exterior doors in that the exterior panels of the door, in this case the side facing the main parlor, has the same cyma recta trim, while the interior panels have none. The door surround matches that of the northwest room, with cyma recta molding and board with bead on the exterior side, and board with bead and one inch board termination on the interior. As stated earlier the northeast bedroom no longer has a door, though the door surround is the same as the two exterior doors in the main parlor.
 - b. Windows: On the first floor, the main parlor has four windows, two of which are located on the east wall and receive light in the morning. Only one window is located on the west wall, with two on the north façade and another three on the south façade. The two exterior doors in the main parlor can be opened to admit natural light into the space if needed. The second floor has seven windows admitting natural light into the space, and though those on the north and south façade are smaller, there are larger gable-end windows on the east and west façades.

The interior trim varies according to location, with all the second floor windows having the same molding as the exterior window molding. The first floor main parlor and west bedroom molding reflect the chair rail molding, while the northeast and northwest bedrooms have simple $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide boards.
6. Decorative features and trim: Though the dwelling is simple in its construction there are several decorative features that are seen throughout

the structure. These are chiefly the wainscot and surbase and ceiling trim. The main parlor has the highest level of decoration, with wainscot, surbase, ceiling molding and decorative fireplace and denotes this area as a public space to be seen by neighbors and visitors. Various decorative elements are seen in private areas as well. In addition to those listed above, the attic gable walls have a molding from the surbase to the ceiling. The use of the same fireplace mantel and surround on the second floor exhibits an attention to detail in areas unseen by most outside the immediate family.

7. Hardware: While evidence of the original hardware is seen on all exterior and interior doors, the locks and doorknobs have been replaced on all four doors of the MacColl House. All hinges are, however original to the 1810 construction. The bean-shaped strap hinges hand-wrought from iron also have their original pintels. Though the door to the northeast bedroom is missing, the original pintels are still attached to the door surround. While the hinges are original, the method of fastening the hinge to the door has required the use of modern screws.
8. Mechanical equipment
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: None
 - b. Lighting: There was originally no electricity. Currently, there are no overhead lights in the dwelling. Light is provided by floor lamps that connect to wall outlets installed during the 2000 restoration.
 - c. Plumbing: There was no plumbing originally but fixtures were added during the restoration.
 - d. Additional features: None
9. Original Furnishings: There are no original furnishings in the dwelling, and there is no known inventory of the items owned by John MacColl or his family.

D. Site

1. Historic landscape design: None.
2. Outbuildings: The original kitchen building from Donoho Plantation was also moved to the Appin Farm site and sits just northwest of the John MacColl House. A one-story, two-room structure, the kitchen house resembles the Scottish byre, a vernacular building type of the working class in the Highlands.⁴ Constructed of hand-hewn pine logs and boards, this building is most likely the first structure built by John MacColl after

⁴ Alexander Fenton, *The Rural Architecture of Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1981).

settling in Marion County in 1809. The smaller room was most likely the kitchen and main living area, while the larger room would have housed livestock and also served as an additional sleeping area for the family.⁵ This analysis is consistent with historical accounts and scholarship of vernacular architecture of the Highlands in Scotland. After the main house was constructed in 1810, this building was converted into a kitchen house, and might still have been used as a barn for keeping livestock.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings: None.

B. Early views: None.

C. Interviews: None.

D. Bibliography:

Beaton, Elizabeth. *Scotland's Traditional Houses*. Edinburgh: Historic Scotland, 1997.

Fenton, Alexander. *The Rural Architecture of Scotland*. Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1981.

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E. Likely sources not yet investigated: None.

F. Supplemental material:

Appin. National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. OBM No. 1024-0018. United States Department of the Interior National Park Service.

⁵ Beaton, Elizabeth. *Scotland's Traditional Houses*. Historic Scotland: Edinburgh, 1997.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This report was compiled by Bridget O'Brien, with assistance from the structure's current owner, Catherine G. Rogers. The measured drawings of the John MacColl House were prepared by Bridget O'Brien, with assistance from Erin McNicholl, Cagin Basaran and David Hidalgo. The project was overseen by Clemson University's Interim Director for the Master's Program in Historic Preservation, Ashley Robbins Wilson.